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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI.

MASTER OF KUNG FU

GAMES OF DEATH AND DECEIT!



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"Call me Shang-Chi, as my *father* did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father: that my name means 'The Rising and Advancing of a Spirit,' and that my body could be forged into a living weapon through the discipline of kung fu. Since then, I have learned that my father is *Dr. Fu Manchu*, the most insidiously evil man on Earth... and that to *honor* him would bring nothing but *dishonor* to the spirit of my *name*."

Stan Lee PRESENTS: MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

"WHEN SERENITY IS A LOST ART... THE ART OF LIVING, AND OF LIFE ITSELF, CAN ONLY SUFFER."

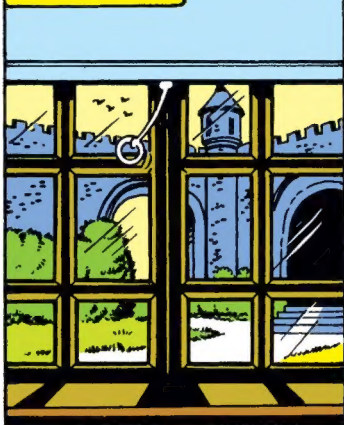
"TRULY, A GREATER LOSS CANNOT BE IMAGINED NOR CONCEIVED."

LOST ART

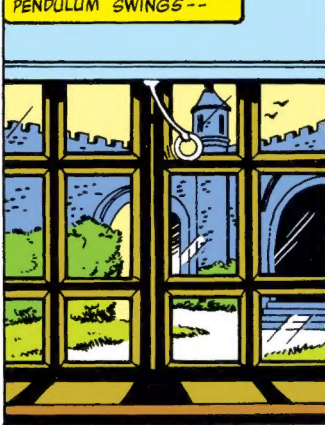
"BUT WHO-- AND WHERE-- IS THE THIEF?"

DOUG MOENCH / MIKE ZECK & GENE DAY / JIM NOVAK / BOB SHAREN / JIM SALICRUP / JIM SHOOTER
WRITER / ARTISTS / LETTERER / COLORIST / EDITOR / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

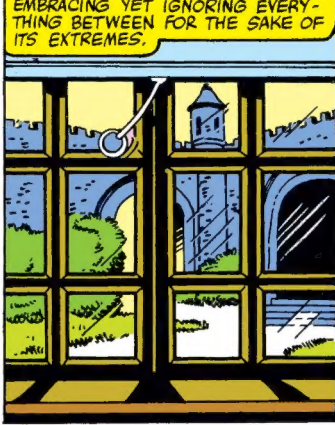
"NIGHT INTO DAY--



-- AND BACK AGAIN, THE
PENDULUM SWINGS--



-- FROM ONE SIDE TO THE OTHER,
EMBRACING YET IGNORING EVERY-
THING BETWEEN FOR THE SAKE OF
ITS EXTREMES.



"DAY--



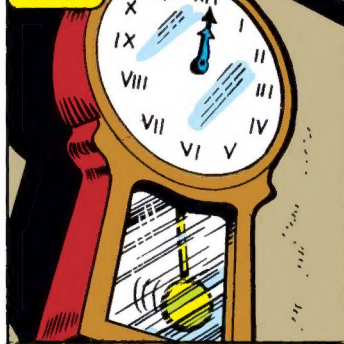
-- INTO--



--NIGHT.



"THE FACE OF A CLOCK EMBRACES
THE TWO EXTREMES AS ONE, YIN
AND YANG SHARING THE SAME
SPACE...



"... THE BLAZE OF NOON COEXISTING
WITH THE SABLE OF MIDNIGHT,
BOTH FOUND AT TWELVE. ONLY TICK
AND TOCK, AT THE PENDULUM'S
EXTREMES, OPPOSE.



"I AM THE MASTER OF TIME,
TURNING NOON TO MIDNIGHT,
LIGHT TO DARKNESS.

"MY MIND IS NOT DECEIVED, BUT MY EYES ARE SOOTHED, AND IT IS A
TIME FOR LOOKING INWARD RATHER THAN OUTWARD...IN THE SOFT
SPACES BETWEEN TICK AND TOCK.

"INDEED, THE TROUBLE BESETTING ME CAN FIND ITS SOLUTION ONLY IN THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE ETERNAL
EXTREMES OF THE YIN AND THE YANG, IN THE DUALITY OF NATURE AS EMBODIED BY DAY AND NIGHT, LIGHT AND
DARKNESS, GOOD AND EVIL, SERENITY AND VIOLENCE. BUT THE DUALITY OF MY OWN SPIRIT HAS LOST THE
BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO EXTREMES. THE DARK SIDE HAS DISPLACED THE LIGHT... AND SERENITY HAS
BECOME, FOR ME, A LOST ART. IT MUST BE REGAINED.

"THE VIOLENCE, OF COURSE,
HAS EVER BEEN PRESENT..."

"... FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS OF
YOUTH TO THE FIRST AWAKEN-
INGS OF MATURITY..."

"... VIOLENCE EVER ERUPTING
TO THE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED
CADENCE OF CHAOS."

"BUT
SOMEHOW,
IN THOSE
EARLIER TIMES,
I WAS ABLE
TO KEEP THE
VIOLENCE IN
HAND --

"-- ABLE
TO MAINTAIN
MY
GRASP OF THE
BALANCE."

"EVEN WHEN
ASSAILED BY
THE WORST
STORMS OF
VIOLENCE, I
WAS ABLE TO
REMAIN
PASSIVE,
SERENE,
CONTEMPLATIVE,
ACCEPTING THE
INEVITABLE
FLOW."

"PERHAPS IT WAS BECAUSE I HAD BEEN SHELTERED BY AN INVINCIBLE AND INVISIBLE ARCH OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHY, THE TAO OBSERVED WITHIN THE SANCTITY AND SECURITY OF MY FATHER, FU MANCHU'S HONAN, CHINA RETREAT. FOR, DO NOT YOUTH AND SHELTER COMBINE TO FORM INNOCENCE? BUT THE FATAL FLAW IN THIS CONSTRUCT, IT SEEMS, WAS THE MUTABILITY OF YOUTH, AND THE TRANSIENCE OF SHELTER. I AGED, AND I LEFT MY FATHER'S HOME... AND THERE, I THINK, IT ALL BEGAN, BUT EVEN SO -- EVEN AFTER I FIRST WENT OUT INTO THE WORLD, LEAVING BEHIND THE SHELTER AND SECLUSION OF THE HONAN RETREAT TO CONFRONT THE OUTSIDE WORLD'S INNUMERABLE CONFLICTS -- EVEN THOUGH THE BALANCE BECAME EVER MORE ELUSIVE -- IT WAS STILL ATTAIN-
ABLE... FOR A TIME."

"BUT THEN IT ALL CHANGED -- GRADUALLY, AND ONLY AFTER A SERIES OF INCREASINGLY INTENSIFIED CONFLICTS -- RECENTLY EXPLODING IN SHOCKING LOSSES OF CONTROL, AND PERHAPS SEEKING A CRESCENDO FROM WHICH THERE CAN BE NO SAFE OR SANE RETURN..."

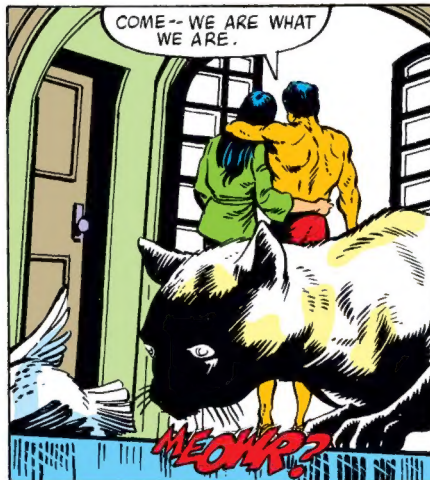
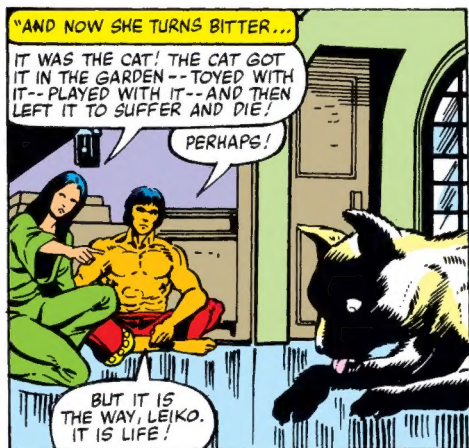
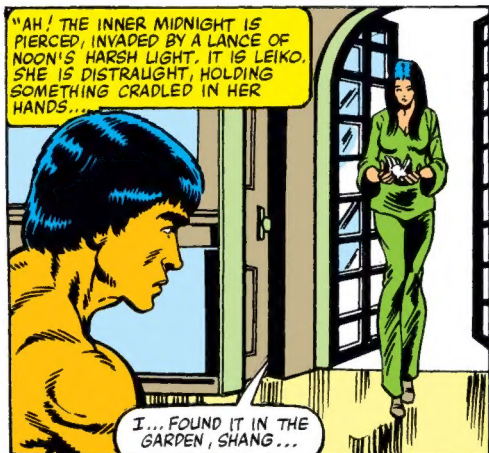
"I FOUND MYSELF WILLING TO RELENTLESSLY BEAT THE WEAPONS MASTER ZARAN, EVEN UNTO DEATH. WHY? BECAUSE HE HAD INJURED BLACK JACK TARR."

"I FOUND MYSELF BRUTALLY ASSAULTING CLIVE RESTON, A FRIEND AND COMRADE, A MAN WHO HAS SAVED MY LIFE MORE THAN ONCE. WHY? BECAUSE HE HAD 'BETRAYED' OUR FRIENDSHIP BY DARING TO KISS LEIKO, BY DARING TO LOVE MY LOVER."

"AND I FOUND MYSELF COMMITTING THE UNTHINKABLE -- DESTROYING THE HONOR HELD BY THE PASSAGE OF BLOOD -- PHYSICALLY VIOLATING THE 'CELESTIAL PERSONAGE' OF MY FATHER FU MANCHU."

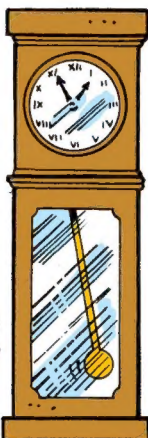
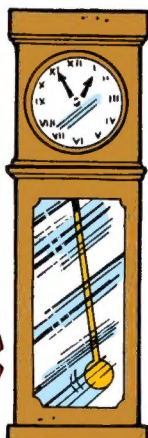
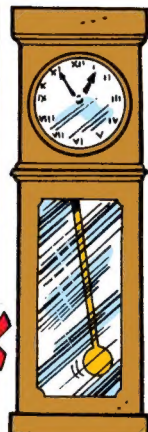
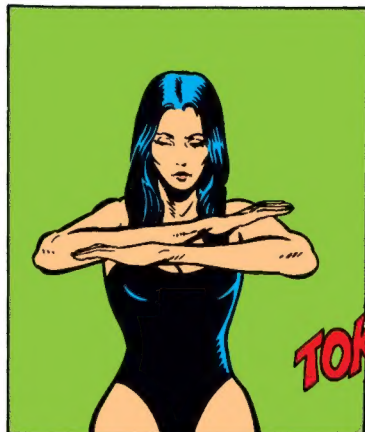
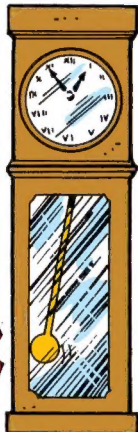
"AND WHY? BECAUSE HE HAD FAILED TO LIVE UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF HIS SON? OR BECAUSE HE HAD SHELTERED ME, FILLING ME WITH FALSE EXPECTATIONS OF ATTAINABLE BALANCE?"

"WHATEVER THE REASONS, I HAVE BECOME ANGRY, TROUBLED, RESTLESS, MACHINE-LIKE AND MECHANICAL, REACTIONARY, REJECTING THE INEVITABLE FLOW. THE FORCES OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD HAVE ACCUMULATED, ONE UPON ANOTHER WITH CRUSHING, OPPRESSIVE WEIGHT, TIPPING THE BALANCE, CROWDING TOO MUCH ON ONE SIDE, DRIVING OUT NEARLY EVERYTHING ON THE OTHER. PERHAPS, IN THE END, IT IS THIS SIMPLE: I HAVE BECOME... *WESTERNIZED*. BUT HAVE I CHANGED? OR HAS THE WORLD? BOTH. BUT WHICH FIRST? NEITHER. IT IS THE SAME. I MUST RECONCILE THE TWO. PEACE AND VIOLENCE ARE BUT TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN, AND I MUST STOP FIGHTING THE NEED TO FIGHT. I MUST RECONCILE THE TWO SIDES OF MY *SELF* AND COME TO GRIPS WITH WHAT *IS*, NOT WHAT *SHOULD BE*. I MUST ACCEPT *ALL* THE COMPONENTS OF LIFE, INCLUDING VIOLENCE, WITH EQUAL GRACE AND BALANCE. IT IS THE ONLY WAY MAN CAN DISTINGUISH HIMSELF FROM THE ANIMAL."



"AND YET, ARE WE? WHY CAN THE CAT NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THE DEATH OF A BIRD OR RABBIT IS A NEEDLESS WASTE OF LIFE? ITS FOOD HAS ALREADY BEEN SLAIN AND NEATLY PACKAGED IN A CAN; ITS BELLY IS FULL. AND STILL IT SLAYS ... KNOWING MORE OR LESS ABOUT SUCH THINGS THAN I --? DOES IT SEE THROUGH THE ARTIFICIAL REALITY, SEEKING AND ATTAINING THE TRUE AND NATURAL BALANCE OF LIFE? AND DEATH?"

"IN THE CASTLE'S GYM: PERHAPS WE CAN BOTH WORK IT OUT..."



"PERHAPS NOT. SIX SWINGS OF THE PENDULUM -- THREE SECONDS -- AND IT IS CLEAR THAT THE LOST ART OF MY SPIRIT HAS TRANSLATED TO A LOSS OF ART IN THE FLESH. THE SKILL IS STILL THERE, WAITING TO BE TAPPED, BUT THE ESSENCE HAS FLED -- PERHAPS BECAUSE MY BELIEF IN IT HAS BEEN ERODED BY TOO MUCH REALITY, OR WHAT PASSES FOR REALITY IN THAT WHICH MEN TRAIN THEMSELVES TO PERCEIVE AS REALITY. A TRUE MASTER PERCEIVES NOTHING IN SUCH TERMS. A TRUE MASTER IS, AT THIS POINT, I NO LONGER AM. THE LOSS WILL BE DIFFICULT TO REGAIN. BUT... AN INSIGHT: SKILL IN THE MARTIAL ARTS IS CULTIVATED TO ATTAIN SERENITY OF SPIRIT -- BUT IS EMPLOYED IN REAL SITUATIONS DEMANDING VIOLENCE OF THE FLESH. OPPOSING DUALITY AGAIN, THERE CAN BE NO HARMONY OR BALANCE BETWEEN PASSIVITY AND VIOLENCE UNTIL ONE SEEKS AND FINDS THE HARMONY AND BALANCE IN VIOLENCE ALONE, THUS SENSING DUALITY WITHIN DUALITY."

"LATER, TARR AND RESTON ENTER AS THE WORKOUT CONCLUDES..."

WELL DONE, CHI. THE TAO STRIKES AGAIN.

WHAT'S UP, CLIVE? BLACK JACK?

WELL, WU, IT'S LIKE THIS-- TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT SIR DENIS IS GONNA HAVE HIS OPEN HOUSE-- WITH THE CATERERS AND THE WHOLE BIT.

SO? WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO IT ALL WEEK. WHY THE LONG HANGDOG FACE?

SO WHILE SIR DENIS IS PLAYIN' SCOTTISH LAIRD OF THE MANOR, SHOWIN' OFF HIS PAINTINGS AND HOSTIN' THE FABULOUS FEAST, TWO OF US HAVE GOTTA GO TO LONDON--

-- TO INTERVIEW A PROSPECTIVE CLIENT INQUIRING ABOUT THE SERVICES OF "FREELANCE RESTORATIONS."

OH. I SEE.

TELL YA WHAT-- WE'LL FLIP YA FOR IT.

GOOD IDEA-- I'VE GOT A COIN RIGHT HERE IN MY JEANS.

SHANG AND I'LL TAKE HEADS.

HEADS IT IS.

BAH!

HOPE YA GET BLOODY INDIGESTION ON THE BIRD TONIGHT.

AND ON THE OTHER SIDE-- HEADS AGAIN!

"A TRICK COIN, WITH TWO FACES."

BLACK JACK GAVE IT TO ME HIMSELF AS A BIRTHDAY GIFT FIVE YEARS AGO-- SAID IT WAS A GOOD LUCK PIECE.

HE WAS RIGHT.

"AGAIN, THE TWO SIDES, THE TWO FACES-- THE DUAL NATURE OF THINGS. BUT THAT WHICH HAS TWO IDENTICAL SIDES, AND NO BALANCE IN OPPOSITION, IS FALSE... AS FALSE AS A TWO-FACED COIN. STILL, IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I HAVE FOUND HUMOR IN STRANGE PLACES... AND NOW, TO FIND IT IN DECEIT-- CHARMING, HARMLESS DECEIT-- IS IMPISHLY REFRESHING. AND WHY NOT? HAD TARR NOT BEEN A ROGUE IN THE FIRST PLACE, HE WOULD NEVER HAVE GIVEN LEIKO THE COIN, NOR ATTEMPTED TO TRICK US INTO RUNNING HIS ERRAND."

"THREE O'CLOCK: THE DOORBELL, FOR ME, HAS TAKEN ON THE SOUND OF A QUESTION, ASKING, 'WHO AWAITS ON THE OTHER SIDE?'"



SIR DENIS NAYLAND SMITH'S RESIDENCE?

YES?



EXCELLENT! I AM THE MAITRE D' --FROM THE CATERERS.

WE HAVE DEFTLY AND LOVINGLY PREPARED A SUPERB ENTREE OF PERDRIX AU CHOU--PARTRIDGE WITH CABBAGE--IN A SAUCE BECHAMEL.

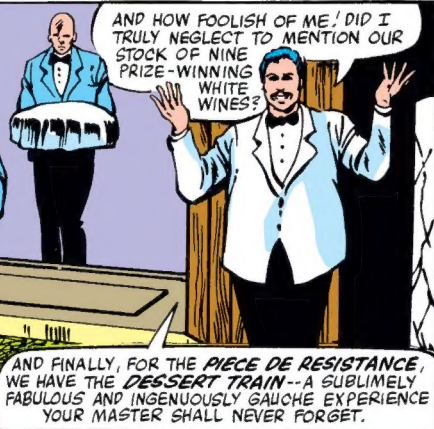


THEN WE HAVE POMMES DE TERRE A LA LYONNAISE AND PETITS POIS A LA FRANÇAISE--

--ALL PRECEDED, BUT OF COURSE, BY HORS D'OEUVRES, SOUP A L'OIGNON, SALADE VERDE AND A SUMPTUOUS SELECTION OF THE FINEST FRENCH CHEESES.



AND HOW FOOLISH OF ME! DID I TRULY NEGLECT TO MENTION OUR STOCK OF NINE PRICE-WINNING WHITE WINES?



AND FINALLY, FOR THE PICE DE RESISTANCE, WE HAVE THE DESSERT TRAIN--A SUBLIMELY FABULOUS AND INGENUOUSLY GAUCHE EXPERIENCE YOUR MASTER SHALL NEVER FORGET.

"I HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE MAN NOT AT ALL -- BUT PURSUING THE MATTER WOULD ONLY BAFFLE US BOTH.



VERY WELL.

THE DINING HALL IS STRAIGHT AHEAD, THEN TO THE LEFT.

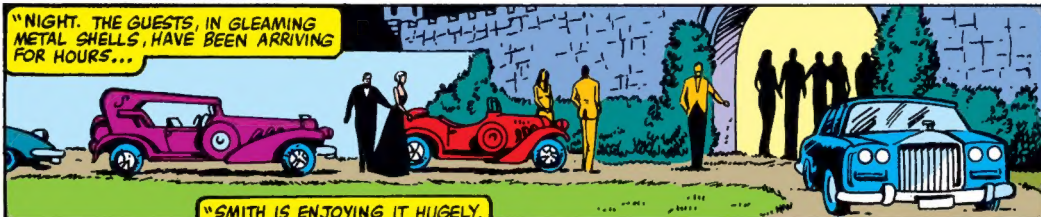
EXCELLENT! QUICKLY NOW-- AND WITH SUBDUED ELEGANCE!



"MY MASTER?"

"DESSERT TRAIN--??"

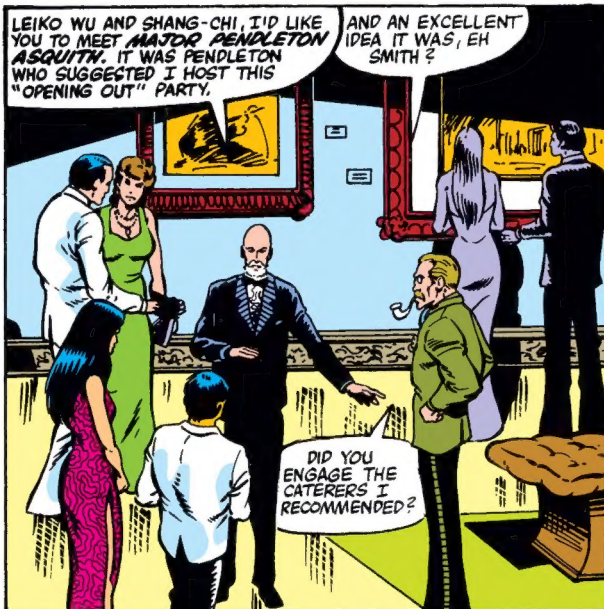
"NIGHT. THE GUESTS, IN GLEAMING METAL SHELLS, HAVE BEEN ARRIVING FOR HOURS..."



"SMITH IS ENJOYING IT HUGELY."

LEIKO WU AND SHANG-CHI, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET **MAJOR PENDLETON ASQUITH**. IT WAS PENDLETON WHO SUGGESTED I HOST THIS "OPENING OUT" PARTY.

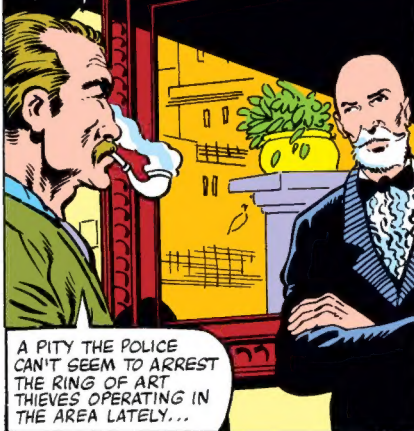
AND AN EXCELLENT IDEA IT WAS, EH SMITH?



DID YOU ENGAGE THE CATERERS I RECOMMENDED?

YES-- A RATHER FUSSY GROUP, I DARESAY, BUT THE FOOD PROMISES TO BE MARVELOUS.

QUITE. INTERESTING CANVAS HERE, SMITH. CALLED "ONE MOMENT FOREVER." EH? ARRESTED LIFE, WHAT WITH THE FROZEN CLOCK AND FALLING PETAL, EH?



A PITY THE POLICE CAN'T SEEM TO ARREST THE RING OF ART THIEVES OPERATING IN THE AREA LATELY...

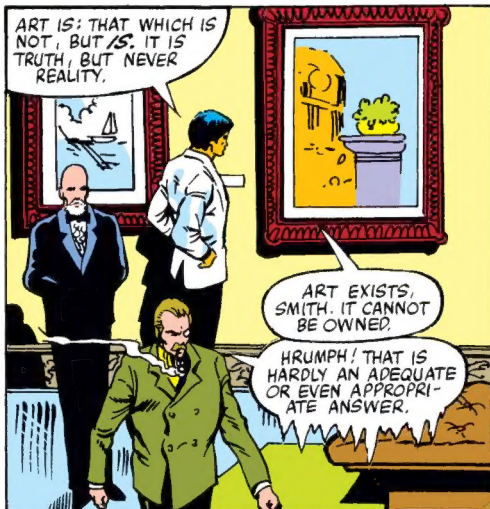
WHICH REMINDS ME, SMITH, OF SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO BRING UP. THIS NEW ORGANIZATION OF YOURS-- FREELANCE RESTORERS, ISN'T IT?-- DO YOU THINK YOUR EMPLOYEES COULD HANDLE THE PROTECTION OF MY MORE VALUABLE CANVASES WHEN I SEND THEM OUT FOR THEIR SHOWINGS ON THE CONTINENTAL CIRCUIT?

A BIT OUT OF OUR LINE, PENDLETON, BUT...



WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK LAD? COULD WE HELP OUT A FELLOW ART OWNER?

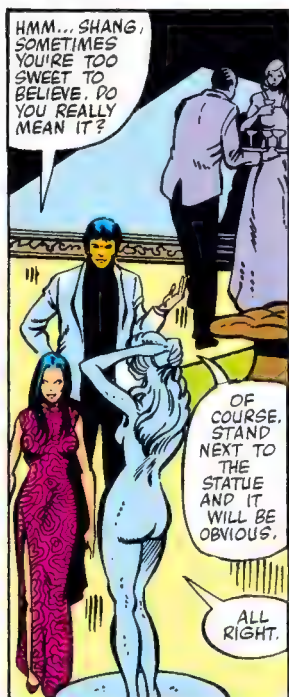
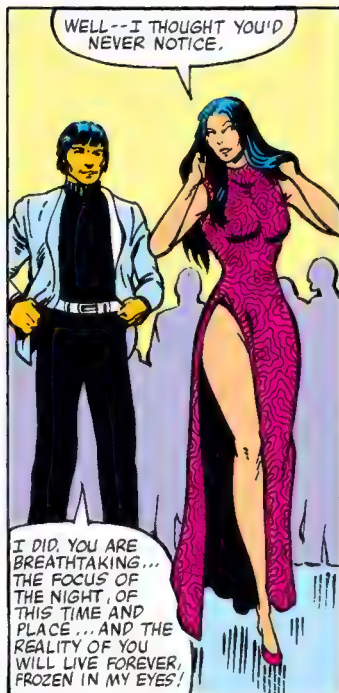
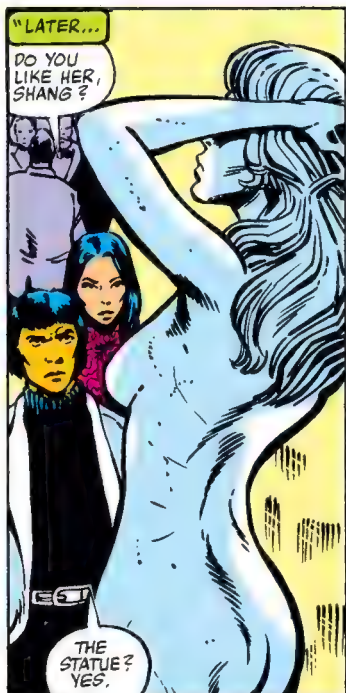
ART IS: THAT WHICH IS NOT, BUT /S/. IT IS TRUTH, BUT NEVER REALITY.



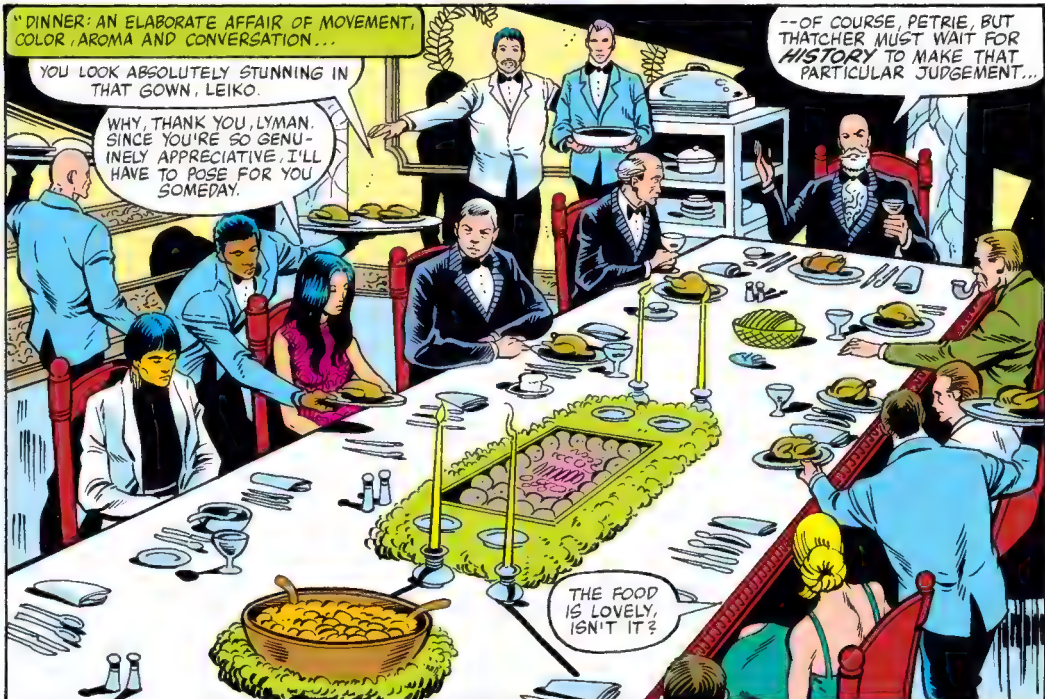
ART EXISTS, SMITH. IT CANNOT BE OWNED.

HRUMPH! THAT IS HARDLY AN ADEQUATE OR EVEN APPROPRIATE ANSWER.

"OF COURSE NOT, NOR WAS IT INTENDED TO BE APPROPRIATE ON HIS LEVEL OF MEANING... BUT HIS ATTITUDE GRATED ON ME, AND I HAVE LEARNED ONLY TOO WELL--AND WITH TOO LITTLE RESTRAINT-- HOW ONE DEALS WITH CERTAIN SITUATIONS IN THE WEST. AND RIGHT NOW, ALL I CARE TO LEARN IS THE SECRET OF THE PENDULUM. IT WAS THIS PAINTING, IN FACT, WHICH INSPIRED MY ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE TROUBLES OF THE PAST FEW MONTHS. WHERE IN THE PAST--IN WHICH FROZEN MOMENT--DOES THE REALITY OF THE ART'S TRUTH LIE?"



"A STRANGE, ASKEW VISION -- LIFE IMITATING ART WHEN ART IS BUT A FILTERED SHADOW OF LIFE. AT LEAST LEIKO HAS TAKEN MY MIND OFF THE LOSS OF MY OWN ART AND, IN SO DOING, HAS PROVEN THAT SERENITY IS PERHAPS NOT COMPLETELY LOST. IT WAS FOUND AGAIN, HERE IN THIS HALL, IF ONLY FOR A FLEETING MOMENT CAPTURED IN HER FACE AND FORM... AND IT WILL BE FOREVER TREASURED IN MY HEART."



"DINNER: AN ELABORATE AFFAIR OF MOVEMENT, COLOR, AROMA AND CONVERSATION..."

YOU LOOK ABSOLUTELY STUNNING IN THAT GOWN, LEIKO

WHY, THANK YOU, LYMAN. SINCE YOU'RE SO GENUINELY APPRECIATIVE, I'LL HAVE TO POSE FOR YOU SOMEDAY.

--OF COURSE, PETRIE, BUT THATCHER MUST WAIT FOR HISTORY TO MAKE THAT PARTICULAR JUDGEMENT...

THE FOOD IS LOVELY, ISN'T IT?



YOU SAID THERE WAS A RING OF ART THIEVES ACTIVE IN THE AREA, NAYLAND?



I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE "AREA", PETRIE -- WE'RE QUITE REMOTE OUT HERE ON THE MOORS -- BUT BRITAIN IS NOT THAT LARGE AN ISLE, YOU KNOW, AND PENDLETON CLAIMS THEY'VE BEEN OPERATING IN THE NORTH COUNTRY...



I SHOULD SAY THEY HAVE! WHY, THEY JUST PILLAGED A PICASSO AND A MONET IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

BLASTED BOORS.



"THE BABBLE INCREASES UNTIL IT SEEMS THAT I ALONE HAVE NO APPETITE FOR TALK... NOR FOR THE FOOD. A WEIGHT HAS SETTLED ON MY HEAD, AND I CAN ONLY STARE DOWN AT MY PLATE..."

"BUT I SEE ONLY A FRAGILE, DYING DOVE CRADLED IN LEIKO'S TREMBLING HANDS... AND THEN I AM LOST AGAIN IN THOUGHT. I HAVE TOUCHED RESTON'S HAND AND TASTED LEIKO'S TEARS, I HAVE SMELLED THE PAST AS THE SCENTED SMOKE OF DRIFTING, CURLING MEMORIES, AND I HAVE SEEN THE TRUTH OF MY OWN LIES, WHISPERED BITTERLY THROUGH RAGE AND LOSS OF CONTROL. I HAVE HEARD THE ECHOES OF OLD FRIENDS CALLING ON THE MIDNIGHT WIND, AND I HAVE VOICED MY SORROW AND REGRET FOR BLAMING THEM WHEN IT WAS EVER ME, LISTENING TO BITTER WHISPERS. NOW I MUST GATHER THE SKINS OF ALL THESE PERCEPTIONS TOGETHER, AND WEAVE FROM THEIR CHAOS A PATTERN OF ORDER. I MUST TRY TO UNDERSTAND THEM... AND, THUS, UNDERSTAND MYSELF.

"AFTER DINNER, SMITH PRESIDES OVER THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE EVENING, A MOMENT HE HAS ANTICIPATED WITH EAGER PRIDE..."

AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT IS MY DISTINCT PLEASURE TO UNVEIL A NEWLY ACQUIRED PIECE BY THE SURREALIST ILADI.

"BEFORE THE EXPECTED MURMURS OF APPRECIATION, AND TO SMITH'S SURPRISE, PENDLETON ASQUITH SEIZES THE MOMENT, HIS VOICE POMPOUS AND SNEERING..."

AH, YES -- SEE, MY FRIENDS, HOW IT PRETENDS TO BE A FACIAL PORTRAIT AT A DISTANCE ...

... BUT WHEN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER IS DRAWN INTO A MORE INTIMATE AND DISCRIMINATING ORBIT...

THAT'S RIGHT--STEP CLOSER.

... IT BECOMES A FULL VIEW OF TWO WOMEN CARRYING BASKETS UNDER AN ARCH.

"THE HAUGHTY DISDAIN RISES TO A FINAL FLOURISH..."

YOU SEE, MY FRIENDS? TWO PAINTINGS IN ONE-- WHICH IS PRECISELY WHY IT IS A MISERABLE, REPREHENSIBLE FAILURE, SAD TO SAY, MERE GIMMICKRY AND OPTICAL ILLUSION.

TWO PAINTINGS CAN HARDLY SHARE THE SAME CANVAS WITH ANY SUCCESS, FOR THEN NEITHER CAN BE ENTIRELY TRUE TO ITSELF.

"SMITH SQUIRMS, UTTERLY CRUSHED..."

"HE WILL FIND NO SHELTER IN THE PAINTING ITSELF.

EXCEPT, ASQUITH...

EH--?

IN THE CASE OF *THIS* PAINTING, BEING BOTH *IS* BEING ITSELF, ITS VERY ESSENCE, AND TO THAT END IT IS COMPLETELY TRUE.

"MORE DUALITY... AND ANOTHER INSIGHT: PERHAPS LIFE IS MEANT TO BE, DESTINED TO BE, SURREAL. SURELY BEING TRUE TO ONESELF DEMANDS THE ATTAINMENT OF A FINE BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO FACES OR SIDES OF THE YIN AND YANG. AND JUST AS EACH SIDE BEARS THE SEED OF ITS OPPOSITE, THEREBY ASSERTING ITS OWN NATURE THROUGH CONTRAST WHILE ALSO HINTING THAT THE CONTRAST DOES NOT EXIST... EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE *MUST* BE BOTH. EVEN BEFORE THE DRUG, HYDE EVER LURKED WITHIN JEKYLL.

AHEM. I DON'T RECALL YOU BEING INTRODUCED AS AN ART CRITIC OF ANY REPUTE OR--

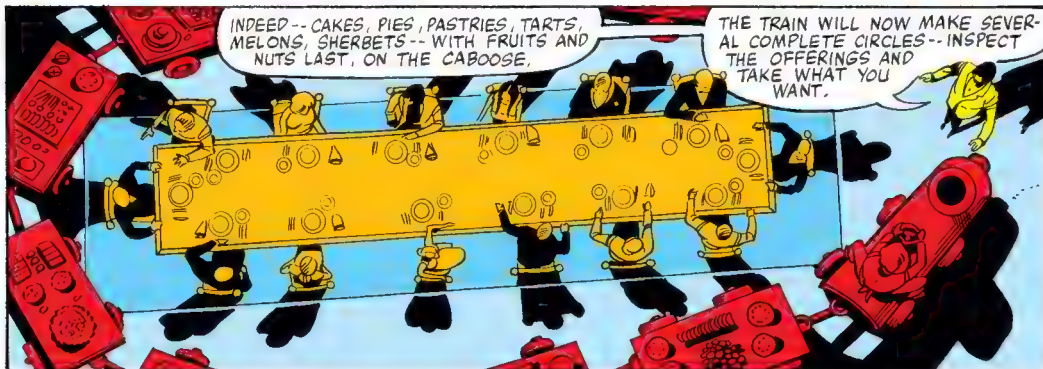
BACK TO THE DINING HALL, EVERYONE-- PLEASE! THE MAGIC MOMENT HAS ARRIVED-- IT IS TIME FOR THE **DESSERT TRAIN!**

"A BELL SOUNDS, LIKE THAT ON A TOY TRAIN. ASQUITH IS SAVED..."

YES, EVERYONE, LET'S MEET THIS DEUCED INCOMING TRAIN. I ORDERED THE THING-- BUT EVEN **I'M** NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR ON JUST WHAT IT IS.

SOON YOU SHALL SEE-- FOR IT IS NOW TIME FOR THE **DESSERT TRAIN** TO ENTER!

GOOD HEAVENS-- IT'S EXACTLY WHAT IT CLAIMS TO BE-- A TRAIN LADEN WITH DESSERTS!



"TAKE WHAT YOU WANT"-- THOSE ARE THE CODE WORDS...

NOW!

EVERYBODY FREEZE!!

WHAT THE--?

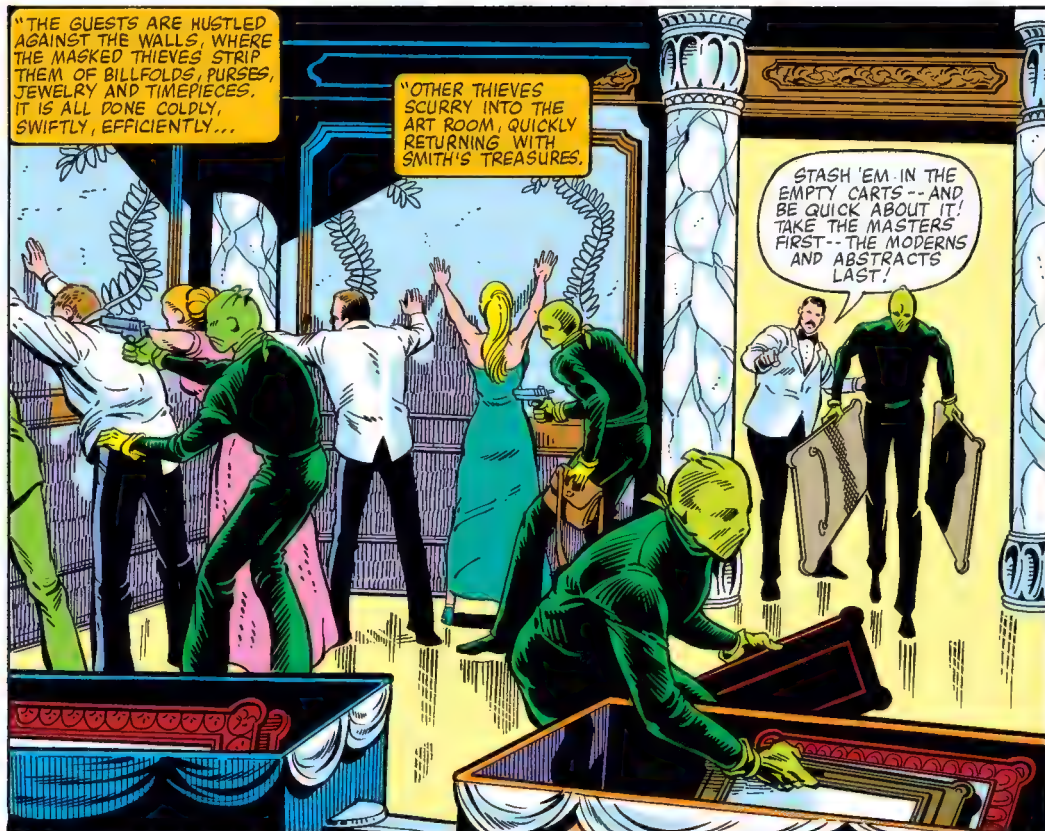
"THE TABLE IS SURROUNDED."

"AGAIN IT EXPLODES-- THE VERY CHAOS I HAVE TRIED TO COME TO GRIPS WITH-- EVER SEEKING PEACE AND SOLACE, BUT FINDING VIOLENCE SEEMINGLY IN EVERY SITUATION I ENTER, NO MATTER HOW ABSURD OR INCONGRUOUS. BUT IF IT MUST BE, THEN AT LEAST I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN IF I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING, IF I **CAN** COME TO GRIPS WITH IT. IN THE PAST, I HAVE SNAPPED, LOST CONTROL, GUMPSSED THE EDGES OF MADNESS. AND NOW...?"

"THE GUESTS ARE HUSTLED AGAINST THE WALLS, WHERE THE MASKED THIEVES STRIP THEM OF BILFOLDS, PURSES, JEWELRY AND TIMEPIECES. IT IS ALL DONE COLDLY, SWIFTLY, EFFICIENTLY..."

"OTHER THIEVES SCURRY INTO THE ART ROOM, QUICKLY RETURNING WITH SMITH'S TREASURES."

"STASH 'EM IN THE EMPTY CARTS--AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT! TAKE THE MASTERS FIRST--THE MODERNS AND ABSTRACTS LAST!"



"FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, LAD, DO SOMETHING! THOSE PAINTINGS ARE PRICELESS!"

"PERHAPS ART CAN'T BE OWNED-- BUT THESE THUGS ARE TAKING A BLOODY GOOD STAB AT POSSESSION."

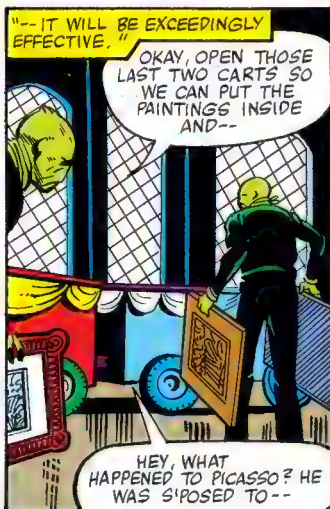
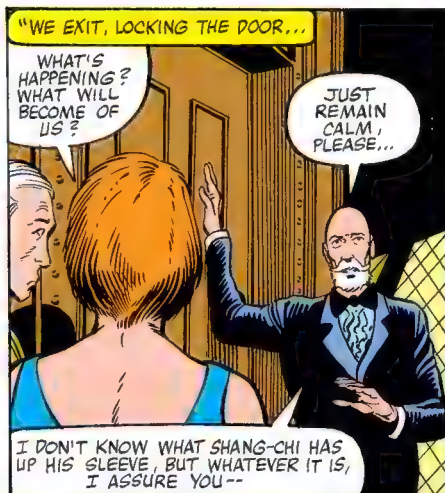
"THEY HAVE GUNS, SMITH. IF LEIKO AND I CAN DO ANYTHING, IT WILL HAVE TO WAIT-- WHEN YOUR GUESTS ARE NOT IN DANGER."



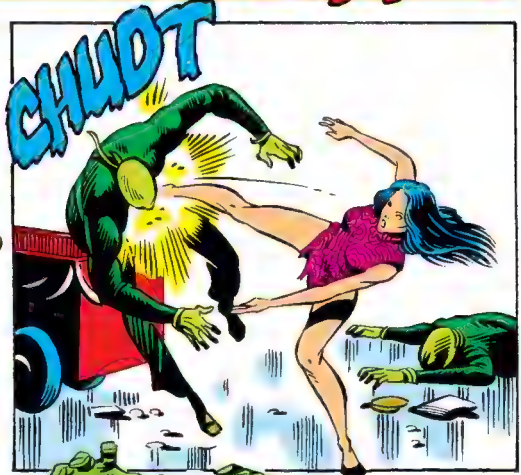
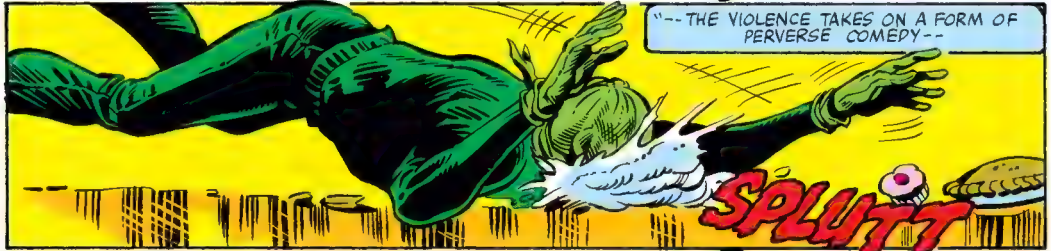
"WHEN ALL POCKETS HAVE BEEN RIFLED, THE 'MAITRE D'-- NOW A MUCH DIFFERENT MAN, REVEALING HIS OTHER FACE--TAKES COMMAND..."



"ALL RIGHT-- LOCK 'EM UP IN THAT ROOM WHILE WE CLEAN OUT THE REST OF THE PAINTINGS, PICASSO, YOU STAND GUARD OUTSIDE THE ROOM HERE-- REMBRANDT, YOU JOIN THE OTHERS WHEN THE DOOR'S LOCKED."









"THE MAITRE D'-- THE LEADER!"

BRAM

"THE SHOT MISSES, STRIKING A STONE CHEEK WHERE EARLIER I KISSED AWAY TEARS GRIEVING OVER SENSELESS KILLING..."

"THE STONE COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN FLESH."

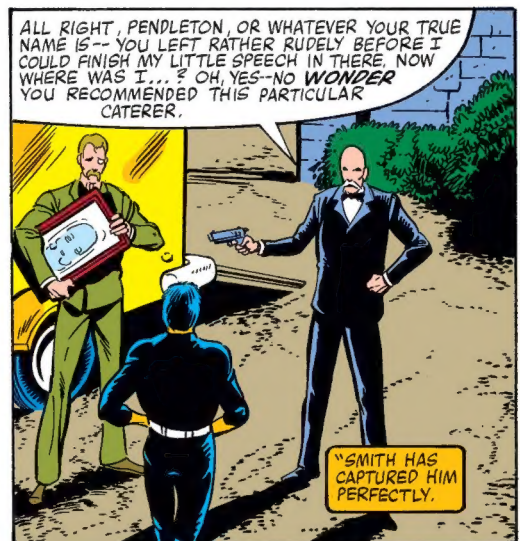
NOW, MAITRE D', YOU ARE ABOUT TO MEET YOUR MASTER...

THE MASTER OF TIME-- AND THE MASTER OF CONTROLLED VIOLENCE!

KCHUMPT

"AGAIN I COME CLOSE TO LOSING CONTROL-- THERE IS TOO MUCH RAGE IN THE KICK, ACCOMPANIED BY TOO MANY SNEERING WORDS-- BUT IT WAS, AFTER ALL, THE NEAR LOSS OF LEIKO'S LIFE WHICH INSPIRED ME..."





MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR
BOB BUDIANSKY
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear People,

Shang-Chi is beginning to scare me. When his fist came through the window of Fu Manchu's UFO, I was every bit as startled as the old doctor himself. It was obvious that in order to have any hope of defeating his father, Shang had to work himself up to this almost superhuman level. But can he ever get back to the peace-loving, introverted old Shang? I hope so, since I don't like heroes who punch out their friends.

Nick Jenny
1000 Irving Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13210

"...can he ever get back to the peace-loving, introverted old Shang?" A good question, Nick, and one which Shang-Chi asks himself in this very issue.

Doug:

I never write to MASTER OF KUNG FU. It always strikes me as a witless, useless act since it's one of the few books where the people in charge thoroughly know what they're doing. Aside from a few congratulations once in a while, you guys seem pretty secure with no need for outside input.

But now I'm writing about #69. One single panel.

After Chi has *finally* struck Fu Manchu (which beats Chris Claremont out of the Longest-Developing-Plot-Element Award, since it's been building since Shang-Chi's very first appearance), and we see the look in Fu's eyes, his total disbelief as the dream dies in his hands...

Absolutely beautiful. Because, in one of those bizarre paradoxes rife in heroic fiction, the villain usually deserves to win. Doctor Doom is the perfect example. He loses over and over simply because he's the villain, not for any other good or logical reason.

Fu Manchu has always deserved to win. As the world has gotten dirtier, passing from one shiftless power-broker to another, it's easier to believe in Fu's dream of a world in perfect harmony, total order and peace without sacrificing beauty, art, or grace. A world of gardens and poets. As we learned how weak Leiko, Reston, Black Jack, and especially the pathetic Smith were, the godlike figure of Fu was a relief. They were insects in his path. In his own heart, he had never known defeat.

Without belaboring it, the East versus West struggle has been excellently depicted in this book. The "yellow peril" of the past as represented by Fu and the blissed out "pacifist" of the present as represented by his son — we have learned that both are lies, yet segments of the truth. And as Chi has become a real person, irritable and irritating, so has Fu. Not as slowly, however, which is my only problem with that one panel. We never see the *process* of Fu's dream dying; it all dies at once, unexpectedly. But then, moments of shock are always abrupt and unexpected. And in that single panel, that single blow, he has lost the dream. All the defeats of nearly a century have struck him at once. He knows he is a dreamer clinging to a fleeting dream of the Dream. And as he loses even that, he is no longer strong and magnificent but simply callow and cruel. He becomes the true villain, because the dream was tainted — and because he realizes it too late. This, in a strange way, signifies that the Orientals are people like anyone else, noble yet fallible. And the death of the two conflicting ideals leads to recognition of the real world. In the future, I'd like to see Chi

dealing with Chinese hating Koreans, Koreans hating Vietnamese...

Steven Alan Bennett
Antioch College
Yellow Springs, OH

And, as you know by now, Steven, Chi *did* deal with the difficult subject. The hatreds between Chinese and Japanese are explored in our two-part "Chinatown Gang War" story immediately following the Fu Manchu debacle.

Dear Doug, Mike, and Gene:

Will Fu Manchu's insidious plan succeed? Will Sir Denis fathom the Devil Doctor's diabolical device in time to save New York City (and the entire cast of characters) from thermonuclear destruction? Ho-hum.

Guys, this is getting *boring*. It seems like every time a guy opens a Marvel mag, someone is trying to destroy New York City. Just last year in PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #27 you had the Maggia activate a nuclear device over New York. Then there was Dr. Faustus and his "mind-gas" in CAPTAIN AMERICA. And the Avengers and the F.F. seem to spend half their time saving New York from destruction. But the point is: We know none of these schemes will ever succeed, because more than half the heroes of Marvel-Earth are based in New York and I can't see Stan the Man canceling everything from MACHINE MAN to all five Spider books just because Fu Manchu managed to start World War III.

The solution, as I see it, is to separate MASTER OF KUNG FU from the organized and stifling reality of Marvel-Earth. Come on, Doug, I dare ya: Destroy New York! Start World War III! Do something different! Isn't that the whole point of Marvel Comics?

More seriously, ever since #71 this magazine has been *superb*. Mike, you've obviously been spending some time in real dojos, watching real martial artists to see how it's done. Keep it up. And you guys really turned Shockwave into a real person in #75; please bring him back. Finally, I love Lyman Leeks. When are you going to explain how his double knew the riddle?

Rogert Feingold
22 Brewster Hill Rd.
Setauket, NY

We did explain. The text of the riddle was gleaned by Fu Manchu's Leopard-Cult spies in South America; the solution to the riddle was deduced by Fu based on the experiences detailed in the flashback to the 1930's. Anyway, we're glad you like Leeks, Rob, because the stout loyalist and Royalist is slated for a major role in our special double-sized hundredth issue. (Major clue as to the mind-boggling identity of that tale's villain: The present-time portion of the story is set in that area of London once infamous as Spitalfields/Whitechapel.)

As for Mike Zeck, well... he may not spend a lot of time in real dojos, but he's definitely a dyed-in-the-nunchaks kung fu flick addict. Indeed, in the guise of researcher, he's been known to take in three of four of the things in a single clip down the 42nd Street grind of movie houses — escaping with life and sanity intact, no less!

—Doug Moench

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST!

- ☐ MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #72 — The Thing and the Inhumans tackle Maelstrom!
- ☐ SPIDER-WOMAN #35 — Angar the Screamer! He'll drive you crazy!
- ☐ STAR TREK #11 — The Enterprise is at the mercy of... Scotty? How? Why?
- ☐ MACHINE MAN #19 — The terrible tricks of Jack O'Lantern!
- ☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #213 — "Off to see... the Wizard!" Plus, a mystery villain!
- ☐ CAPTAIN AMERICA #254 — The return of Cap's WWII vampire foe: Baron Blood!
- ☐ THOR #304 — Thor battles the Wrecker and his Wrecking Crew!
- ☐ MICRONAUTS #26 — The Hydra/SHIELD! Micro war. Plus: *Baron Karza!*
- ☐ GHOST RIDER #53 — The fury of the She-Witch!

- ☐ MOON KNIGHT #4 — A committee of assassins have Moon Knight in their sights!
- ☐ DR. STRANGE #45 — "Demons In My Sanctum!"
- ☐ INCREDIBLE HULK #256 — Greenskin vs. Israel's Super Heroine, Sabra!
- ☐ AVENGERS #204 — The return of the *Yellow Claw!*
- ☐ CONAN #119 — Conan fights for the undead soul of his grandfather!
- ☐ MARVEL TALES #124 — (Reprints Spider-Man #147) — The Tarantula and the Jackal team up against Spidey! Bonus: Origins of the Inhumans!
- ☐ X-MEN #142 — Showdown with the new *Brotherhood of Evil Mutants!*
- ☐ ROM #15 — Brandy gets married — to a Dire Wraith!
- ☐ POWER MAN AND IRON FIST #67 — Cage at the mercy of Bushmaster!
- ☐ FANTASTIC FOUR #227 — Suddenly — the Brain Parasites!

- ☐ MARVEL TEAM-UP #102 — Spidey and the Hulk's buddy, *Doc Samson*, become partners in peril!
- ☐ IRON MAN #143 — Space-duel with the Sunstunton!
- ☐ PETER PARKER #51 — The aliens' secret! Plus: Mystery!
- ☐ DEFENDERS #92 — If the Defenders can't save *Eternity* — the Universe dies!
- ☐ MARVEL SUPER ACTION #28 — (Reprints Avengers #67) — The vengeance of Ultron-6! Plus: the Hulk!
- ☐ STAR WARS #44 — At last! The final chapter of *The Empire Strikes Back!*
- ☐ MASTER OF KUNG FU #97 — Shang Chi confronts his own dark side!
- ☐ SGT. FURY #162 — (Reprints Sgt. Fury #68) — Fury's deadly furlough!
- ☐ SAVAGE SHE-HULK #13 — Guest-starring *Hellcat* and *Man-Wolf!*
- ☐ WHAT IF #25 — "What If Thor went to War Against Odin!" Guest-starring the *Avengers!*

- ☐ MARVEL PREMIERE #58 — More adventures of Britain's favorite time traveller... *Dr. Who!*

MARVEL MAGAZINES

- ☐ EPIC #4 — Dazzling fourth issue featuring: Moorcock's *Eric*, adapted by Thomas and Russell; Starlin's *Metamorphosis Odyssey* plus new wonders from Robert E. Howard, Harlan Ellison, and more as the visual odyssey moves ever onward! Cover by Michael W. Kaluta.
- ☐ SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #60 — "The Ivory Goddess!" Plus: info on the Conan movie!
- ☐ CRAZY #70 — The Best of Crazy! Plus: an all-new bonus — "Everything You Need To Form Your Own Rock Group And Make Millions Of Dollars Even Though You Have Absolutely No Musical Ability Whatsoever." Where!
- ☐ MARVEL PREVIEW #24 — We have seen the future and it is... *PARADOX!* Not for kids!